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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the crisis in U.S. school leadership. Two major components of this crisis are shortages of available school leaders and preparation of school leaders by schools, colleges, and departments of education (SCDEs). Much criticism has been leveled at SCDEs, which have historically prepared school leaders. However, the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE) posits that SCDEs are capable of meeting the dual challenge of quality and quantity for the next generation of school leaders. The AACTE and university-based programs are prepared to handle this challenge. SCDEs' mission and commitment to teacher education and to school leader preparation will not allow for anything other than a sustained effort in both areas. Educational leadership and administration in the academy is understood to be, and handled as, a subject discipline. SCDEs have the infrastructure in place to accommodate all of the necessary components of good professional development for PK-12 leaders. The AACTE is in the position to move educational program agendas firmly toward necessary change. AACTE invites all informed partners to collaborate on such issues as broadening outreach and establishing partnerships, enhancing the presence and knowledge of diversity, and continuing contributions toward stronger accreditation and licensing standards. (SM)

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PK-12 Educational Leadership and Administration

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A steady stream of recent documents, from press reports to commissioned studies, have identified the new and pressing problem eating away at the nation's PK-12 schools, particularly at student achievement: *a crisis in school leadership*. The two major components of this crisis that are receiving the most attention are the shortage of available school leaders and the preparation of school leaders by schools, colleges, and departments of education (SCDEs).

The Shortage

Many school districts report an imminent crisis due to the number of current and future staffing vacancies, particularly in the position of principal. For example, a lead story last fall in a Sunday edition of the *New York Times* reported that numerous districts across the country started the school year without a principal in place (Steinberg, 2000). The New York City school system alone was faced with 195 principal vacancies for the 1999-2000 school year, along with 144 schools being led by interim or acting principals.

Further evidence of a shortage of school leaders available to lead was presented in the 1998 study, *Is There a Shortage of Qualified Candidates for Openings in the Principalship?* (Educational Research Service). The report, based on information gathered from a number of state departments of education and principal associations, found that 47% of urban districts, 45% of suburban districts, and 52% of rural districts reported shortages of qualified candidates for principal vacancies. The deficits were also spread across elementary, middle, and high schools. One reason provided for the shortages was that an estimated 40% of all principals are retiring or at least reaching retirement age. According to the Educational Research Service report, 62% of principals surveyed intend to retire in their 50s. It is predicted that more principals than in past years will seek retirement at an earlier age because of the increased pace and stress experienced in the principalship. Also related to the shortage problem are other concerns such as working conditions, issues of comparative compensation, unrealistic job expectations, and the level of stress associated with the principalship—all phenomena which exacerbate the problem that teachers holding administrative certification (a pool from which school leaders, particularly principals, traditionally have come) are not stepping forward to fill administrative vacancies.

Leslie Fenwick, a former principal and currently visiting scholar at Harvard University, questions whether a crisis really exists. She writes, "The discussion on principal shortage continues to be devoid of any real examination of the underlying forces energizing it" (2000). She contends there is no shortage, as "almost half (47%) of the nation's teachers possess master's degrees and nearly every state report indicates that there are numerous teachers holding the administrative certificate who remain in classrooms."

Professional Preparation

Much criticism also has been leveled at SCDEs—the institutions that have historically prepared this nation's school leaders. There is concern about the level of effective skills, knowledge, and experience that many graduates of school leader preparation programs bring to their assignments. At the core of this issue is the criticism that SCDEs' administrator preparation programs are significantly out of touch with the real-life, day-to-day demands confronting school leaders today, particularly those who take employment in urban districts. SCDE capacity to produce sufficient numbers of leaders also has been called into question. Skeptical policy makers, funders, journalists, and education association leaders contend that alternatives need to be found for the preparation and con-

tinuing education of a new generation of school leaders.

In response to such criticism, AACTE emphatically rejects those assertions and posits instead that SCDEs *are* capable of meeting the dual challenge of quality and quantity for the next generation of school leaders. School leaders are needed who will energize school communities to focus on the single most important variable of school life—student learning. Leaders who are able to transform schools to benefit student learning can only be prepared in high-quality preparation programs that combine the strengths of teacher education with the strengths of other school personnel preparation programs—precisely what SCDEs have to offer.

While SCDEs have the infrastructure to address the preparation crisis, they must not do so in isolation. For too long, many SCDEs have remained on the sideline while policy makers and legislators have developed policies affecting school leadership. SCDEs are now being called upon to take an inventory of their "house." In order to prepare educators to meet today's challenges, it is essential that SCDEs work with state and local school boards to adopt a common vision for school leadership and find active and continuing opportunities to collaborate. By doing so, all necessary stakeholders will have an opportunity to arrive at and stay on the same page.

Lastly, there is an awareness among most informed educators that the nature and culture of school leaders should and will evolve into a more diverse cadre of individuals than currently exists. There are more females in school leadership positions than in the past, but not nearly parallel to their representation in the teaching force. Similarly, people of color are markedly underrepresented in school leadership ranks. As the demographics of the nation continue to transform the face of this society into a more diverse learning community, the same transformation is not evidenced on university and college campuses across the nation, nor is it in the ranks of school and district leadership.* SCDEs will continue to work toward reconciling these disparities within the academy.

A Compelling Need for SCDE Involvement

For a number of reasons, AACTE and university-based programs are poised to handle these issues. Specifically:

SCDEs' mission and commitment to teacher education as well as to school leader preparation will not allow for anything other than a sustained effort in both areas. They have been and will be in it for the long haul.

Most SCDEs exist primarily to produce good teachers for the nation's PK-12

*America's classrooms are becoming increasingly diverse; more than one-third of the students in PK-12 classrooms are from minority groups. The families of an increasing number of students are immigrants, many with native languages other than English and from diverse religious backgrounds. Yet most students do not have the opportunity to benefit from a diverse teaching force, nor a cadre of diverse school leaders. According to recent statistics provided by the Council of Great City Schools (March 2000), among the school districts responding to their survey, 42.1% of school superintendents in 1999 were African Americans, 14% were Hispanics, and 42.1% were white. Genderwise, women made up 34.5%, men 65.4%. In 1999, only 20% of superintendents were women. As far as principals, the National Center for Education Statistics reported in its1997 publication, *Public and Private School Principals in the United States: A Statistical Profile, 1987-88 to 1993-94,* that of the 79,618 public school principals in 1993-94, only 10% were African American, 4% Hispanic, and less than 1% Asian-American or American Indian.

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schools. Teacher education reform of the last two decades is premised on the belief that educators must manifest qualities of leadership, whether they are in the classroom or in the central administration office of a major school system. In essence, as long as there are good teacher preparation programs, there will be a cadre of individuals primed and available to assume educational leadership and administrative positions in the nation's schools.

While the majority of principals rise to their positions from a variety of school positions ranging from curriculum specialist to athletic coach, the single most common characteristic among virtually all principals in this nation is teaching experience in PK-12 schools. Further, they report the greatest positive influence on their practice as principals has been teaching in elementary, middle school, and secondary classrooms (Fiore, Curtin, & Hammer, 1997). Principals and other educational leaders of today and tomorrow will continue to emanate from the teaching ranks. Their seminal knowledge of teaching and student learning, which is essential to doing a good job, is a direct contribution of SCDEs.

Educational leadership and administration in the academy is understood to be, and handled as, a subject discipline.

Educational administration remains the predominant field of study for public school principals, with approximately two-thirds of all principals holding a degree in that field (Fiore, Curtin, & Hammer, 1997). University-based programs offer academic courses, exposure to various teaching and leadership strategies, and learning in cohorts that are designed to translate into informed and effective practice and induction or internship experiences. The majority of these programs arrange for a significant amount of field and clinical work, research, and study. While there is significant debate and criticism about the proper and appropriate measure of these components, SCDEs have in place the infrastructure to organize professional preparation in a manner most suited to prospective educational leaders (Milstein & Krueger, 1997). The yield of this work stands to benefit how prospective teachers and leaders effectively operate within the school environment with teachers, students, parents, and the wider community.

Education is our business and our only business. We know our clients.

During a period of immense competition within the academy to meet the needs of various constituencies, SCDEs remain focused on preparing quality personnel for PK-12 schools. They know their clients, and they share a core value: Individuals continue to indicate that the reason that they come and remain in the education profession is to help children grow and develop. Youngsters and their learning are at the heart of the mores and ethics of university-based education. As the nation increasingly embraces this period of privatization in education and its services, SCDE faculty and staff keep their eye on the prize.

SCDEs have the infrastructure in place to accommodate all of the necessary components of good professional development for PK-12 leaders.

Prospective PK-12 leadership candidates and those who continue to enhance their skills can avail themselves of a safe learning environment in the academy. Here they are free to ask questions, seek answers, and fine-tune their skills with professional and knowledgeable faculty guidance. Further, SCDEs typically have

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libraries and technological resources specifically designed for adult learners. Within AACTE, member institutions and professional development schools must provide laboratories for effective practice and experience.

The Association, through its many programs and projects and its connections with K-12, higher education, and administrative organizations, is in the position to move educational program agendas firmly and deliberately towards necessary change.

Hundreds of SCDEs are organized under the AACTE umbrella. This Association is a strong coalition of a wide range of institutions that influence change in many policy arenas.

The Charge

AACTE concedes that there are a number of real needs in the preparation of school leaders in the academy that require immediate attention, such as:

- an enhanced commitment to diversity in the ranks of educational leadership students and faculty and in the curriculum taught;
- a more clearly defined and validated conception of the program components of high-quality preparation;
- a more contemporary knowledge base on PK-12 systems, buildings, faculty, students, and their respective communities and cultures;
- increased funding and resources devoted to educational administration and leadership programs; and
- a more coherent route for the professional development of school leaders—from initial training to continuing education.

The present crisis, real or imagined, provides AACTE and its member institutions a great opportunity to benefit and prosper by taking stock in the institutions that have been historically committed to preparing PK-12 school leaders. It should also be recognized that our society is rapidly changing with information and technological advances. SCDEs, like most other institutions, struggle to keep pace. Further, school leadership mastery must be seen as a lifelong learning process that does not end with completion of formal education.

AACTE must lead the way and provide member institutions a course of direction for the present crisis in school leadership preparation. The nearly 750 SCDEs, community colleges, state departments of education, and organizational affiliates of AACTE recognize and are prepared to grapple with the formidable challenges presented in training educational leaders for PK-12 schools of today. There are a host of menacing issues within and just shy of SCDEs' reach that must be resolved. Distributed leadership can only be achieved in SCDEs where teachers, counselors, and principals are prepared and sustained in collaborative professional programs.

A Call to Action

The following are areas that AACTE, as a representative of university-based professional development, is prepared to pursue in this regard and challenge others to join in garnering resources to enhance educational administration and leadership programs. Specifically, AACTE invites all informed partners to work together on the following issues.

Instigate necessary change.

AACTE is compelled to address the general public misconception that SCDEs do not have the moral temperament or political skill to make adjustments that are necessary to serve their clients best. It is AACTE's role to review the educational administration and leadership landscape, to identify dysfunctional areas, and to convene knowledge-

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able practitioners, policy makers, and scholars to seek resolutions.

Construct a clearly defined and validated conception of program components.

Studies of university-based educational administration and leadership programs are consistent in calling for well-organized program entry and exit requirements, management, internship placement, supervision, and evaluation (Clark & Clark, 1997). Recognizing that the greatest pool of prospective principals will continue to come from SCDEs, resources must be acquired to focus more time and energy on these programs. AACTE will work with its members to identify legitimate ways to enhance professional development schemes and productivity in these areas.

Designate a coherent route for continuing professional development.

SCDEs have the know-how to construct and develop opportunities for the lifelong learning of school leaders. Prospective school leaders can no longer complete the required course hours and then be left to navigate the principalship or the superintendency without constructive opportunities for continuing education. Due to the contextual realities of each learning environment, the usual one-size-fits-all approach to constructing coherent professional development opportunities would not be in keeping with the principle of lifelong learning.

Broaden outreach and establish partnerships.

AACTE will work with its members to perfect and increase their outreach to PK-12 school communities, parents, and district officials in order to establish useful and reasonable professional development aspirations for prospective and seasoned educational leaders. Too often, school districts are forced to "go it alone" when it comes to developing school leaders professionally. As a result, SCDEs are in the best position to develop creative long-term partnerships with these school districts to assist with the training of school leaders. AACTE endorses the concept of partnerships and believes that the key to resolving these difficulties lies in the SCDE-school district collaboration. One successful example is the St. Louis Educational Leadership Institute. The merit of partnerships was so evident that the institute received funding from the Danforth Foundation.

Enhance the presence and knowledge of diversity.

AACTE recognizes that the absence of racial, ethnic, and linguistic diversity in the ranks of educational leadership students and faculty discredits what is otherwise good quality work. Consistent with the mission of the Association to bring diversity to bear on the knowledge base and practice of all educators, AACTE will work with its members and affiliates to maximize the participation of individuals from underrepresented groups in university-based educational leadership and administration programs.

Establish a more current and relevant knowledge base on contemporary youth and their respective communities and cultures to inform PK-12 systems, buildings, and faculty.

AACTE will work to advance in its educational leadership and administration programs considerable knowledge on contemporary youth and their families, communities, and cultures in order to inform the various PK-12 systems, buildings, and faculty. Situating contemporary youth as the locus of the misunderstanding or problem may act as a barrier to the much-needed construction of theories and practices that can assure that youth receive the life skills necessary

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to meet the challenges of the 21st century. Youth culture continues to change and expand at a rapid pace, which calls for more resources to explore and study their styles, perspectives, and knowledge.

Give consideration to effective ways to prepare a new generation of professors of school leadership/school administration

Impanel a group to explore doctoral preparation for prospective faculty that reflects the best of school leadership. Explore the possibilities of model programs and their development for prospective faculty.

Continue contributions toward stronger accreditation and licensing standards

AACTE will continue its efforts of school leadership reform by sponsoring policies and practices that strengthen accreditation and licensing standards as articulated by the standards of the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education. Additionally, AACTE will continue to play a prominent role in the American Board of Leadership in Education (ABLE).

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AACTE is publishing this document to stimulate discussion, study, and experimentation among educators, policy makers, foundation officials, and others interested in school leadership.

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